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Letter: Half-mile rule protects public safety

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(Photo: Clarence Tabb Jr., file / The Detroit News)

The half-mile rule designating where liquor stores can and can not open is not in place to only protect the merchants and their businesses. It is necessary for public safety.

Eliminating it, which is what the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) wants to do, would be irresponsible and could potentially put added unnecessary burdens on police.

The rule, which has been around for more than 40 years, prohibits off-premise retailers selling liquor from obtaining a license to do so unless they are located at least a half-mile from a similarly permitted retailer.

Even though, there are set number of liquor licenses allowed in the state of Michigan, licenses can be moved around from city to city, and potentially cities like Detroit and other larger cities in Wayne County and around the state like Westland and Livonia could end up with a liquor store on every corner of the busiest intersection.

This is not only a potential traffic nightmare for law enforcement, it could put many drivers at risk and create accident prone intersections.

Auday Arabo, president and CEO of the Associated Food and Petroleum Dealers, appropriately noted that "There is no real public policy reason for this change."

Enough alcohol is sold in Michigan to supply every state resident, regardless of age, with eight alcoholic drinks a week, according to data from the Michigan Liquor Control Commission.

Alcohol is a \$6 billion industry in the state, and those sales keep going up, according to the MLCC's most recent reports. Why do we need more liquor sales? Why create congested intersections and corners of liquor stores in cities?

We as law enforcement professionals and those in public policy must protect rules that are in place to protect the public. This half-mile rule makes sense. It has been effective for more than 40 years. The MLCC has not given any valid reason to change it. Yet, there are many reasons to keep it intact.

Benny N. Napoleon

Wayne County sheriff